

PULLING UP THEIR ROOTS



Recorder Staff/Matt Burkhart

Tye Ouellette-Tolles collects some of the nutrient-rich soil from the Greenfield Community Garden on the corner of Pleasant and School streets in Greenfield Wednesday as she prepares for the move to an interim garden to make room for the new senior center. "What I love about this garden is it really feeds me for the whole year. I have sadness and hope," said Ouellette-Tolles.

Community garden move makes way for new senior center construction

By ANITA FRITZ
Recorder Staff

GREENFIELD — It looks like more than 30 gardeners will be displaced for at least a year as the town begins to prepare the school administration property on Davis Street for construction of a new senior center.

Marjorie Lane Kelly, the town's finance director — who is acting mayor while Mayor William Martin is away this week — said she met with Jerry Moore, chairman of the Senior Center Building Committee, and five community gardeners this week to discuss the logistics of moving the town's community garden.

"The mayor wanted gardeners to know that preparation of the site will be happening soon so that they have some time to remove whatever they wish," said Kelly.

She said testing of the soil on the prop-

erty will most likely begin within the next three to five weeks.

Martin announced in October that the town and its Senior Center Building Committee have chosen the school administration property on Davis Street as the site for the new senior center. The plan is for the administration to move out of the building, which will eventually be razed, by the end of the school year in June.

The town plans to open the new senior center some time next summer, according to Martin.

Kelly said the chance of anyone gardening on that property next year is slim to none, so the town made the decision to have everyone move now. She said the community garden will return to the site most likely the following year, when the senior center is open.

"The town is going to start boring in the garden area," said Kelly. "We're not

sure where that's going to have to happen, so everyone's plot is in jeopardy. There just isn't going to be room for the garden during construction."

Pamela Lester, who has been gardening there for about five years, said it's a good plan for the long run, but not so good for the short-term.

"We're finding out about this in November," she said. "It's going to be difficult to move perennials, everything, but I understand."

Lester said the five gardeners who met with Kelly earlier this week were assured that the garden will return to the site.

Kelly said the community garden will return there, but it isn't yet clear whether it will be located on the same spot.

"If it isn't, the town will work with UMass Extension to make sure the soil

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has the nutrients gardeners will need to replant," said Kelly.

The town has begun the design phase of the senior center project. Martin said construction will begin in the spring.

Kelly said some gardeners may choose to skip a year of gardening, while others have decided to move their gardens elsewhere. She said the town is looking for a town-owned property close to Davis Street that gardeners could use for a year. She said some gardeners, who happen to be members of Just Roots community garden at 34 Glenbrook Drive, have said they will ask if they

can move their gardens there for the year.

Kelly said the town's Department of Public Works has agreed to help gardeners move sheds, benches and plants to another location.

There are 36 plots in the current garden, with between 30 and 35 individuals and families gardening them. It is not clear if the garden will increase in size.

Some of the possibilities being discussed at this time, because the community garden is included in the design of the senior center, include building raised beds, accessibility, irrigation, adding a compost area and lighting, planting trees, digging up bindweed and installing a water station.

Community garden founder Eveline MacDougall,

who recently moved from Greenfield, so is no longer involved with the garden, said she and others broke ground in 1999 and people began gardening the following spring.

"We've always been the town's guests there, and the town has always been so supportive," she said. "It's not a bad thing to have to stop gardening for one or two seasons."

MacDougall said it will be somewhat inconvenient for gardeners to have to move their perennials and such, but it can be done without losing much.

"It has long been a fantasy of mine to see even more terrific things happen in that garden," said MacDougall. "It looks like that's going to happen. People just need to be patient."

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